

**EMPOWER U Hub Procedure**

1. **Referral into the EMPOWER U Hub**

Anyone concerned about the exploitation of a child should use the [request for support form](https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/info/3/information_for_professionals/40/refer_a_child_who_you_re_concerned_about) for the Children's Advice & Support Service (CASS) within Birmingham Children’s Trust, accompanied with the [Exploitation Screening Tool](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/birminghamcs/doc-library/#section9Nested1). This process mirrors those for all children where there are safeguarding concerns. CASS will process the referral in line with [Right Help Right Time guidance](https://lscpbirmingham.org.uk/delivering-effective-support).

If a child is allocated within the Trust then the worker will complete an assessment of the exploitation concerns and complete the Exploitation Screening Tool. The worker should seek advice from their manager, and if required, from the Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinator for The Trust (duty line – 0121 464 7967 – team email: [EMPOWERU@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:EMPOWERU@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk))

Guidance on completing the screening tool can be found in [Exploitation Screening Tool Guidance on Trix](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/birminghamcs/doc-library/#section9Nested1). The completed screening tool should be sent to: [EMPOWERU@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:EMPOWERU@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk).

If the worker’s risk assessment is that the child is at high risk of exploitation, then a strategy discussion should be convened using the Strategy Discussion Request form on Eclipse. If the worker is from Family Support or YOS, then a ‘step up’ to ASTI for a strategy discussion is also required. The Request for a Strategy Discussion form should include an invitation to the strategy discussion for the Exploitation Police and the Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinators as a minimum. Other partners with expertise in exploitation may also be relevant to invite. As with any strategy discussion other partners, such as health, are required.

Once the Exploitation Screening Tool is received into the Hub it is considered by the duty Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinator. If the assessed risk of exploitation is high, the co-ordinator will ask the worker / manager to request a strategy discussion, if not already requested. If the assessed risk of exploitation is medium or low, then the co-ordinator will place the child onto the agenda for the EMPOWER U Morning Briefing for triage. If there is no risk of exploitation identified, then the screening tool is not processed further.

1. **Principles of the EMPOWER U Hub**

The value of the EMPOWER U Hub is that it focuses on disruption from a multi-agency perspective. This may be about:

* Support, intervention or diversion for the victim;
* a person of interest or exploiter; or
* a location

Possible disruption opportunities should be considered as soon as possible. Disruption plans are mainly agreed at strategy discussions and disruption planning meetings, but where appropriate they can be agreed at other meetings within Children Social Care safeguarding processes or YOS processes, The Modern Slavery Panel and Local Delivery Partnership Group.

It is likely that an initial disruption plan can be developed as more information comes to light. Sometimes it is possible for a robust disruption plan to be put in place at the strategy discussion. Sometimes it is appropriate to agree that a screening tool is completed / updated and sent into EMPOWER U for further consideration of the disruption plan at morning briefing and possibly at a disruption planning meeting. As new information comes to light then the disruption plan is amended or built upon by a fresh screening tool being sent into EMPOWER U.

A review will be booked at the end of the disruption planning meeting. The review date will be determined by the Chair. As plans are fluid the review meeting gives the opportunity to re visit the concerns, review the risk rating and as new information comes in can offer further disruption of perpetrators and locations.

The lead practitioner must be identified, as well as the child’s trusted adult . Every agency has a responsibility for their actions within the plan and the plan should form and be embedded within the overall plan for the child (CIN /CP/CIC/EHCP).

Disruption plans should be incorporated into the overall planning for a child (i.e. CIN, CP or CiC Plan) – they should not be seen as stand-alone plans. This will be challenging at times as, by their nature, third party information is being discussed.

1. **Strategy discussions**

All children assessed as high risk of exploitation should, where appropriate and necessary be discussed within a strategy discussion (see above).

A complex strategy discussion should be convened if there are multiple children involved (see Contextual Safeguarding Practice Guidance – Strategy Discussion (including complex Strategy Discussion).

There is a Prompt Sheet available to advise the Chair and other parties of what should be covered.

The strategy discussion must consider the disruption plan; the risk level (child is being exploited, child is vulnerable to exploitation , evidence to suggest that child is likely to be exploited and/or no evidence of exploitation and whether a review is required or initial disruption planning meeting . Area Coordinators need to notify EMPOWER U Business Support when the classification is agreed (as only they can now input the classification into Eclipse) and the review/initial Disruption Planning Meeting date.

The disruption plan can be recorded within the strategy meeting minutes and needs to outline both actions already in place and those agreed at the strategy discussion meeting. The co-ordinator (or other partner from the EMPOWER U Hub) will record the plan, agreed actions, keyworker and review date on the child’s records within Eclipse. A copy of the minutes (once agreed by the Chair) will be circulated to all agencies present at the meeting.

1. **EMPOWER U Hub Morning Briefing**

The EMPOWER U Hub meets every day at 9.30am to consider any relevant information since the previous working day’s meeting, what strategy discussion meetings are planned or require chasing up and to triage the exploitation screening tools coming in.

The Morning Briefing triages the exploitation screening tools that have been sent in to the EMPOWER U inbox, which have been assessed by the worker as medium or low risk of exploitation. The screening tools are considered within 24 hours of being received (unless the screening tool is received post mid-day in which case the screening tool is listed for discussion within 2 days). Up to 3 screening tools a day are discussed (this may increase dependant on demand).

If the exploitation risk is considered to be low by the partners at Morning Briefing, then the co-ordinator will feed this back to the worker. Any advice regarding intervention and prevention is passed onto the worker and the co-ordinator will record this on the child’s record in case notes within Eclipse. If the exploitation risk is assessed as medium, then a disruption planning meeting is arranged. Any disruption opportunities identified at the Morning Briefing are initiated straight away. There will be a discussion as to who to invite to the disruption planning meeting – virtual partners (i.e. Housing) and other key workers (i.e. Police Offender Manager) should be considered. If the risk is assessed as high, then the worker will be asked to convene a strategy discussion. Sometimes the recommendation is that there is no evidenced risk of exploitation.

The agreed risk will be recorded on Eclipse by business support both as a case note and as a classification (note – only EMPOWER U BS (business support) are now authorised to put on/amend an exploitation classification).

1. **Disruption Planning Meeting**

A disruption planning meeting will be held usually within 72 working hours of the Morning Briefing. On occasions it may be appropriate to extend this timescale in order to ensure a key professional is able to attend or a key piece of information is available. Currently three per day (Tuesday to Friday) are booked into half hour slots.

The disruption planning meeting is chaired by a Team Manager or West Midlands Police within the Hub. The keyworker and area coordinator is crucial to this meeting.

The meeting is noted by Business Support and recorded on a Disruption Planning Meeting form within Eclipse. Agencies attending the meeting should ensure they record any actions relating to themselves. The note taker will inform EMPOWER U Business Support of the classification decision, who will in turn make any changes to the classification level on Eclipse. The note taker will also inform EMPOWER U Business Support of the keyworker and review of actions date. A copy of the Disruption minutes and plan will be circulated to all attendees once agreed by the Chair.

1. **The Disruption Plan**

The Home Office Child exploitation Disruption Tool Kit should be referred to when

considering a disruption plan. Guidance on this can be located in the Contextual Safeguarding section within TRIX.

The Prompt Sheet and Disruption Planning Meeting record give guidance as to what should be covered in the disruption plan.

The disruption plan will be recorded on the Disruption Planning Meeting form. If a Disruption Planning Meeting is held then the notes of the discussion will also be contained in the Disruption Planning Meeting form. If the disruption plan is discussed in other meetings, then the notes / minutes of discussion will be within the record of that meeting (i.e. strategy discussion notes / minutes will contain the record of the discussion).

The disruption plan needs to outline both actions already in place and those agreed at the meeting, so that the overall disruption plan is clear. The key worker should be identified, the timescale for individual actions should be agreed and a review of actions with dates set within the disruption plan.

The disruption plan actions will be reviewed by the keyworker with assistance from the

The Trust Co-ordinator (see sections 7 and 10).

The keyworker will share the disruption plan with the chair of the child’s planning meeting.

It is helpful if the keyworker, or other as appropriate, maps the peers / associates and

any places of interest prior to a disruption plan being discussed. This needs to be shared

with other parties before a disruption plan is discussed to enable agencies to make checks

on all possible links. It is also expected that co-ordinators / agencies make checks on

their agency systems before the meeting and investigate any queries / possible links. It

may be that live checking is necessary when in a disruption plan discussion, but as much

preparation as possible should be completed beforehand.

1. **Reviewing the disruption plan**

A date for the review of disruption plan will be set at every discussion of a disruption plan. The timescale for these will be considered individually for each child, but this will not exceed three months. It may be helpful to set the review timescale in line with a child’s next CIN / CP / CiC Review.

The primary focus of the review is whether the actions have been progressed, whether the risk has reduced /increased, identification and update from the trusted adult and whether appropriate support and intervention is in place, whether the plan needs adapting and consideration to any further disruption activities. In addition, whether concerns are such that a strategy discussion is required.

As part of this process all present will need to consider if the exploitation assessment level is correct. If the view is that the level should be stepped up, then this would imply that further information has come to light and the process of requesting a disruption planning meeting is triggered (see sections 3 and 8). If the view is that it should be stepped down, then the process of stepping down the risk level is triggered (see section 8).

As part of this process the agencies present at the meeting will consider whether a change to the disruption plan is needed. If this is needed, this can be determined within the meeting – if the risk is high then a strategy discussion is convened, and the disruption plan is discussed at the strategy discussion (see section 3). If the risk is medium, then the screening tool will be considered at Morning Briefing and if appropriate a disruption planning meeting set up (see section 5).

1. **Stepping up and stepping down the exploitation risk**

There are four potential levels of risk – three are defined within the Exploitation Screening Tool (high, medium and low risk of child exploitation). If none of these are evidenced, then there is no risk of exploitation.

If the exploitation risk has increased, then a refreshed screening tool is sent to the EMPOWER U email inbox. If high risk, it will trigger a strategy discussion and the disruption plan will be discussed at the strategy discussion (see sections 3 and 7). If the risk is medium, then the screening tool will be discussed at the Morning Briefing and if appropriate a disruption planning meeting set up (see sections 5 and 7).

If the exploitation risk has decreased, then the keyworker contacts the Trust Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinator to discuss this change. This may be when a risk is considered to have moved from high to medium; or to low or no risk. The keyworker will communicate with the co-ordinator for their area about the proposed change. A refreshed screening tool maybe be required to evidence the reduced risk. The co-ordinator will then consult with all partners in the Hub, giving them 3 working days to respond in writing. Partners will be asked if they agree with the proposed change; and whether they have any new information to add to the assessment.

If the Hub is in agreement with the keyworker’s proposed change then the co-ordinator will inform the keyworker of this; and will ask EMPOWER U Business Support to amend the classification level.

If the Hub is not in agreement with the keyworker’s proposed change then the co-ordinator will arrange a case consultation to discuss this with the keyworker.

If the co-ordinator is not in agreement with the final decision taken by the keyworker then this will be escalated to the team manager of the Exploitation & Missing Team in the first instance. In this situation the classification level will not be changed whilst the matter is escalated.

The keyworker and their manager should not move to close a child’s case down until there has been agreement with the Hub Team Manager (see section 8).

It is important any reduction in risk is recognised (ie high to medium) as this forms part of the data set for us in the Trust to identify positive outcomes for children.

1. **Disruption for Level 2 contextual safeguarding concerns**

The Bedfordshire Model ([contextualsafeguarding.org.uk](https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/)) identifies two levels of disruption. Level One is around intervention and diversion for the child (the sections above relate to this). Level Two relates to the contexts and groups that a child (or children) is exposed to that may be causing harm / exploitation.

Level Two has been previously been addressed by the CSE Operational Group (COG) and Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Operational Group. Persons of interest and locations have been referred into the panels. Since Covid restrictions these panels have been suspended. Their remits are currently under review. Pending the outcome of the review the Hub will identify either a disruption planning meeting or other meeting (see section 9) to consider disruption opportunities for persons of interest and locations.

There are other forums within Birmingham where Level Two exploitation concerns can be referred. These include the Local Delivery Partnership Group (Community Safety) and the Modern Slavery Panel (Birmingham City Council). Co-ordinators can advise on these. Referrals to such panels will be discussed within, and made by, Hub partners.

1. **The co-ordinator’s service offer (please refer to the co-ordinators offer)**

The co-ordinators will arrange case consultation with lead practitioners which can involve a review of the disruption plan.

The co-ordinator will support the keyworker to ensure that all relevant information is shared appropriately (i.e. FIB).

The co-ordinator will ensure that the disruption plan is recorded on a Disruption Planning Meeting form and is on the child’s file. This means the co-ordinator will raise this within any meeting the disruption plan is discussed, if not clearly outlined by the Chair.

The co-ordinator will advise EMPOWER U Business Support of any changes required to the exploitation classification level, the keyworker.

There will be a co-ordinator attached to each of the three areas (East, South and North West Central); CASS; YOS; and the citywide teams (Disabled Children’s Service, UASC, Homeless Team and 18+). The NRPF team will be captured within NWC.

The co-ordinators will provide advice and consultation to their respective areas. They will advise on mapping and take part in this within their area.

The co-ordinators will attend meetings within their respective areas to offer updates and briefings (i.e. practice forums, team meetings). The co-ordinators can be asked to facilitate any champions meetings.

The co-ordinators will advise their area of when they will be available to offer the above. In addition to area work the co-ordinators will be taking part in three central duty rotas (general duty; missing duty; and Disruption Planning Meetings).

The co-ordinators will attend their Local Delivery Partnership Group (LDPG - replacement of COG) for their area and feed into those meetings and feed back to their local area.

The co-ordinators will ensure that their diaries are free on allocated area weeks so practitioners can book in case consultation.

The co-ordinators will also link to alternative educational provisions within their local area and be a bridge between them and the area and provide awareness raising within the provision.

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Reviewed August 2022 Clair Graham